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# 1  The Myth of a Judeo-Christian Tradition: Introducing a European Perspective

Since the fall of the Iron Curtain there has been a steady rise in the use of the term 'Judeo-Christian' by European theologians, politicians, historians and philosophers. Is it possible that such divergent public figures as Geert Wilders, a right-wing populist politician in The Netherlands, Jacques Derrida, a left-leaning French philosopher, and Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, use the term 'Judeo-Christian tradition' in the same manner? Is there any means to pin down the meaning of this term as it is now being used in Europe? Or is this term, which 'has achieved considerable currency' throughout Europe – both popular and scholarly, a shibboleth as was claimed by Mark Silk in his 1984 'Notes on the Judeo-Christian Tradition in America' (Silk 1984, 65). Silk was responding to Arthur Cohen's American-based analysis of this term in 'The Myth of the Judeo-Christian tradition' (Cohen 1971, original essay 1957). Cohen decried the use and abuse of the term 'Judeo-Christian Tradition' in North America in the post-Shoah decades. He was quite explicit with regard to his thesis.

> And it is here that we can identify the myth. Jews and Christians have conspired together to promote a tradition of common experience and common belief, whereas in fact they have joined together to reinforce themselves in the face of a common disaster … before a world that regards them as hopelessly irrelevant, and meaningless. The myth is a projection of the will to endure of both Jews and Christians, an identification of common enemies, an abandonment of millennial antagonisms in the face of threats which do not discriminate between Judaism and Christianity. (Cohen 1971, xix)

According to Cohen there is no Judeo-Christian tradition; this tradition is an ideologically motivated myth. For those unfamiliar with this essay and its historical context, the common enemy Cohen refers to is the rise of atheism and its ties to 'the Red Threat' of Communism. Given that Cohen was writing not only from an American perspective, but also in the 1950s, it is worth considering if his thesis is still accurate. He writes: "It is in our time that the 'Judeo-Christian tradition' has come to full expression. … [and] has particular currency and significance in the Unites States. It is not a commonplace in Europe as it is here" (*ibid*. xviii–xix). While this may have been true in the 1950s, it is no longer the case sixty years later. The term 'Judeo-Christian tradition' was central to the debates about

the EU Constitution between 2003 and 2005[1] and is currently used by politicians from all parties as well as religious leaders of all denominations. As such it has become part of common parlance in all European languages in the 21st century. It is this European 'coming to full expression' in the 21st century that is central to this current volume.

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Before trying to disentangle the many diverse uses of the term 'Judeo-Christian' in contemporary European discourse, let us briefly consider the possible origins of the concept or signification of Judeo-Christianity.[2] To help navigate this complex concept, we begin by sifting through the theological, philosophical, and political literature on the notion of Judeo-Christianity. Three possible historical origins emerge: the early Church period prior to the 'parting of the ways' between Judaism and Christianity (200–400 CE) (Dunn 1999; Boyarin 2006; Becker and Reed 2007), 17th century Enlightenment thought, and 19th century theology (greatly inspired by German Idealism). As there is a clear theological connection between the first and third hypothesis, we can consider them together by way of the writings of Bernard Heller and Simon Claude Mimouni, both theologians, the former in Jewish studies in the US and the latter in early Christianity in France (Heller 1951; Mimouni 2012). As a second step, we consider the authors that locate the origins of this tradition in the Enlightenment period (very broadly construed) such as: Joel Sebban, Isaac Rottenberg, Marshall Grossman, and Arthur A. Cohen (Sebban 2012; Gover 1989; Rottenberg 2000; Grossman 1989; Cohen, Stern, and Mendes-Flohr 1998). Within this group, Sebban is the only author writing about this signifier on the (European) Continent. All the other authors are explicitly interested in the role of this term in American public discourse. What we hope to make clear is that these distinctions, European or American, theological or political, Jewish or

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**1** Please see part 2 of chapter 14 for more on this.

**2** This attempt, not surprisingly, has many potential pitfalls and problems. How arbitrary is one's stating point? While arbitrariness is potentially unavoidable, transparency may partially serve to offset it by allowing each choice to be acknowledged, justified and scrutinised. From among the many attempts to trace the notion of Judeo-Christianity (or the Judeo-Christian tradition or heritage etc.), there are two dominant albeit intertwined lines. *First* there are those authors that have sought to understand how this term arose in the contemporary American political context (Cohen; Rottenberg; Gover in his response to Grossman); *second* are those authors interested in the transformations of the theological significance of this concept (Teixiodor, Heller, Mimouni). Another possible frame, explored in this volume, lies at the intersection of these two lines, in the realm of the theological-political.

Christian, affect the frame of each author and as such influences what they take to be the origins and meaning of this signifier.

Heller's 1951 piece, 'The Judeo-Christian tradition concept: air or deterrent to goodwill?', published in the journal *Judaism*, ambitiously claims that this tradition has "a long and cherished history" (Heller 1951, 133). This history has four phases: its origin in the period directly following the birth of Jesus, 19th century German theological supersessionism, 20th century racial anti-Semitism (which he connects to Nietzsche), and most recently political Orientalism. Explicitly demarcated by the horrors of the Shoah, Heller's frame leads him to narrate the transformations of the notion of Judeo-Christianity in terms of shifting anti-Semitism e.g. from theological to political via racial anti-Semitism. Framed in a similar vein to Marshall Grossman's 1989 deconstructive analysis of the 'violence of the hyphen in Judeo-Christian', Heller's ideological motivation to prove that anti-Semitism is as old as Christianity prevents him from appreciating the Foucauldian inspired concern in Grossman's analysis – the role of power, and its relation to discourse. Concretely, Heller wants to paint a picture of 2000 years of uninterrupted anti-Semitism from the birth of Christianity to the Shoah. He thus fails to acknowledge the radical difference between Early Church (pre-Constantine) inter-community tensions and the latter three phases. While there was undoubtedly a great deal of anti-Judaism in the period when Christianity was born, this phase of Judeo-Christianity was one in which there was an unambiguous relationship between these communities and their followers, an ambiguity that caused tension and sometimes led to violence, but was by no means – in terms of power dynamics – an early form of anti-Semitism (Boyarin 2006). Heller's account of the origin and history of the term 'Judeo-Christianity' is entirely focused on anti-Semitism and its roots in Christianity.

This type of bias is clearly avoided by Claude Mimouni in his highly detailed analysis of the concept of Judeo-Christianity. He corrects Heller's anachronistic error by tracing its origins to the 19th century and specifically the writings of F.C. Baur (influenced by both Schleiermacher and Hegel), who he claims was the first person to use this term *in print*. Mimouni thus demonstrates that the term Judeo-Christianity was introduced by the 19th century German Protestant theologians who sought to bring attention to the period of the early Church in which there was much tension between the competing notions of Christianity (many of which were seeking to define themselves *vis-a-vis* Judaism). In this vein, the first use of this term was theological in origin and served to identify different early Christian communities that were close to Judaism in terms of either *praxis* or *dogma*. While Baur's later usage of this term varies, its original purpose was one of classification, part and parcel of the new academic discipline of religious studies (*Religionsgeschichte*). It is perhaps Mimouni's restricted interest in the

discipline of theology that accounts for his neglect of the term's pre-theological origins in the wider political space. Yet if one does not take this wider context into consideration, one could just as easily declare its origin to be much earlier given that scholars several centuries before began to study these same early Christian communities and their relationship to Judaism showing a surprisingly strong interest in Hebrew and scripture. It is upon this basis that Javier Teixiodor dates Judeo-Christianity's conceptual origin to the authors of the 15th and early 16th century engaged in translating the Bible, such as Valla and Erasmus, who emphasised the importance of its Hebraic or Judaic roots (Teixidor 2006). While Mimouni is correct to acknowledge that Baur was the first to explicitly use this term Judeo-Christianity, he (and Teixiodor) fails to appreciate the *political* motives that led to a renewed interest in these early Christian communities, and the reading of the Bible in Hebrew, its original language (Nelson 2011; Topolski 2016).

One of the most significant contributions to the discussion about the origins of the term 'Judeo-Christian' that does consider the *political* motives is that by Joël Sebban (Sebban 2012). With an explicitly French focus, Sebban locates the roots of this term in the emancipation of the Jews in the year 1791. The French context is clearly influenced by events on the European continent and the role of the Catholic Church (as the writings of Jacques Maritain demonstrate, see (Maritain 2012; Andras and Hubert 1996)). In this vein, 'la morale judéo-chrétienne' has several ideologically different manifestations. Sebban develops several of these political responses to the idea of a Judeo-Christian tradition such as: a liberal Christian ideology (at the turn of the 20th century), a last attempt to save the life of the spirit by religious philosophers in the 19th century, and most recently in the form of a discourse of civilisations. While it is clear that, as Sebban argues, these competing ideas all came to the surface during the French Revolution, Sebban does not consider the events and intellectual climate prior to the French Revolution. Instead, he moves quickly from 1791 to 1831, Baur's first usage of the term only then slowing down and engaging in a very close analysis of 'la morale judéo-chrétienne' from Baur to Renan via Nietzsche, an analysis that is confirmed in several contributions to this volume. As many scholars examining this term contend, its origins cannot be fully appreciated without its connection to questions first raised in the 17th century about the relationship between Church and State, between Judaism and Christianity, and between monarchists and republicans. For this reason it is surprising that Sebban does not connect the events of 1791 to the earlier debates about the role of religion in philosophy or the dialogue on modern forms of statecraft. To do so, we now turn to contributions by Gover, Rottenberg, and Cohen who all situate the origins of this term in the Enlightenment.

As Sebban demonstrates, the concept of Judeo-Christianity certainly goes beyond the boundaries of theology, a fact which all of the authors who locate its origins in the period between the 17th and 18th century equally appreciate. Yerach Gover, who shares Mimouni's interest in theology, traces the origins of the concept of Judeo-Christianity from the renewed interest in Hebrew, the Bible and its critical study during the Reformation to the thinkers of the Enlightenment. While he recognises the essential connection between theology and philology in the 16th century, he neither connects this to the political project it enabled – the *Respublica Hebraeorum*, an integral part of the genealogy of the notion of Judeo-Christianity, nor does he connect the upsurge in interest in Hebrew, language and texts, to the Protestant Reformation. Instead he focuses on their role as the founders of several new fields of study, such as comparative religions. The latter is undoubtedly related to the political tensions within the Church, yet Gover's frame does not call for a closer political analysis (in this vein his analysis is close to Mimouni's). In the 16th century, primarily in Protestant milieu, the academic interest in other religions, both Christian and non-Christian, is facilitated by the political campaigns for tolerance and separation between Church and State as well as the search for a *prisca theoloigca* (an *ur*-religion). Evidence of this lineage are two students of John Selden (1584–1654), who wrote many renowned writings on the *Hebrew Republic*, James Harrington and Thomas Hobbes, both of whom also sought to draw political lessons from the Hebrew scriptures.[3]

While Cohen's analysis is US-centred, he does state that there is more to the myth of the Judeo-Christian tradition than the American tale he tells. As such he dedicates a few paragraphs to the European history of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Drawing an analogy to its usage in the US in the 1950s, Cohen states that, "The Judeo-Christian connection was formed by the opponents of Judaism and Christianity, by the opponents of a system of unreason which had nearly destroyed Western Europe" (Cohen 1971, xviii). He refers specifically to both the rise of atheist thinkers in Europe from the 17th and 18th centuries, such as Spinoza and Voltaire, as well as those trying to carve an intellectual space for a rational religion in the 18th and 19th century such as Kant and Hegel. Though Cohen is less interested in the genealogy of the Judeo-Christian myth, he does clearly indicate that – for those interested in its historical origins – one ought to begin in the 17th century.

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**3** For more on the relationship between Hebraic texts and European political thought see Eric Nelson's *The Hebrew Republic* (2010).

> It could not be helped that in the attack on Christianity Judaism should suffer, for Christianity depended upon Judaism for the internal logic of its history … It could not be otherwise, then, but that a 'Christo-Jewish tradition' should come to be defined and characterized as one of irrationality and fanaticism. (Cohen, Stern, and Mendes-Flohr 1998, 34–5)

Cohen refers to this 'Christo-Jewish tradition' as the origins of the myth in that this link between Judaism and Christianity eventually leads to the ideological myth he seeks to debunk. While this strikes us as a plausible explanation, it would have been inconceivable in the 16th century. While 15th century scholars were keen to read the Bible in Hebrew, it would be a stretch to claim that Christians would have recognised that their inner logic is Judaic (this remains contested by thinkers today such as Marcel Gauchet and Charles Taylor). In this context, Cohen refers to Spinoza as a Jewish precursor to the Enlightenment who played a particular role in bringing together the Hebrew Bible and the Christian religion. While we agree that Spinoza played a pivotal role in the melding of Judaism and Christianity, we do so with more care and attention to detail. Writing with broad brushstrokes, Cohen states that, "the Christo-Jewish legacy was both affirmed and opposed" (Cohen, Stern, and Mendes-Flohr 1998, 35) by the thinkers of the Enlightenment. The question he fails to consider, however, is: why was this 'Christo-Jewish' tradition defined and what exactly did it mean (at the time)? Likewise Cohen fails to consider the aims of Spinoza's sparring partners. Did all those that affirmed this tradition seek to oppose it? To answer this and other related questions, a closer analysis of Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* and its reception history are necessary. In any case, the importance of this period, during which Christians found new ideas and inspiration from the Jewish texts and tradition, and specifically Spinoza's *Tractatus,* for the origin of the idea of the Judeo-Christian tradition or heritage, should not be underestimated (Topolski 2015; Topolski, 2016).

In his article 'The Idea of a Judeo-Christian Worldview', Isaac Rottenberg claims that it was during the 17th century that "the religiopolitical foundations were laid for the future shape of American society" (Rottenberg 2000, 403). Accordingly, the theological-political roots of the US were to be found in the Protestant interpretations of Hebrew Scriptures as models for political constitutions. This is what he refers to as the Judeo-Christian worldview which was born in Europe in the 17th century. In this vein, Rottenberg contests Cohen's claim that this tradition is a myth or that it was forged out of self-defence. Without focusing on any specific philosopher or text, Rottenberg paints a picture of the thinkers and questions being debated by intellectuals, who were often politically involved or influential, during this period in European history. Along similar lines, he refers to Spinoza and Locke (influenced by Hobbes and Grotius – both Christian Hebraists) as "two advocates of religiopolitical theories" (Rottenberg 2000, 404)

who found themselves in a milieu overflowing with religious fervour. While the Enlightenment is often characterised as a period in which reason reigned and the state freed itself from the grips of the Church (as Cohen assumes), one could contend that this is perhaps a prime example of history being written by the victors. It is worth recalling, as both Nelson and Rottenberg highlight, that there was an upsurge in religious zeal, and specifically in mystical and millennialist dreams in the 17th century in both England and The Netherlands (Nelson 2011; Rottenberg 2000). It is in response to this surge, and its connection to sectarian conflict, that Spinoza and Locke both made demands for religious tolerance and a critical approach to scriptures. While Rottenberg does little to distinguish between their particular approaches (which are quite different), he acknowledges the different role of the "'new theology' and it socio-political implications" (Rottenberg 2000, 406) for Catholics and Protestants. Similarly, the mainly Protestant interest in Judaism and Hebrew blossomed into groups of Hebraic Christians or Christian Hebraists who found arguments for democracy, participation, and religious tolerance in the Bible. Accordingly he connects these groups to the foundations of America. In this scheme, Europe is ruled by a Catholic hegemony, America by the Protestants.[4]

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Fortuitously, Rottenberg's trans-Atlantic 'parting of the ways', between Catholics and Protestants, sets the scene for this volume with its explicitly European (and implicit Germanic) focus. This latter 'parting of the ways' parallels the 2nd – 4th century 'parting of the ways' between Jews and Christians which was the focus, and point of dispute, between Catholic and Protestant theologians in the 19th century. Before immersing ourselves in these debates, let us consider what this overview of the major contributions on the origins of the concept of Judeo-Christianity makes clear. While there is clearly no consensus on the meaning of this term, there is a scholarly consensus on the importance of Enlightenment political-theology and its 19th century coinage by F.C. Baur. In this vein, we can conclude that while there are many accounts of the importance of the 17th century thinkers for

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**4** So what about the minorities on both sides of the ocean? Glossing over the fact that Spinoza was Jewish, albeit only as a fact of birth, Rottenberg does not consider how this struggle between Church and state was viewed or experienced by those who were excluded from both. This fact is one that we must take into consideration when analysing Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, the only contribution to the *Respublica Hebraeorum* literature written by a Jew.

the roots of the connection between Jewish and Christian texts, beliefs etc., the term itself only arises in the 19[5] century.

As this volume aims to tell the European tale of the Judeo-Christian tradition, our starting point is the *attribution* of its coinage in 1831 in a publication by Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792–1860), the founder of the German Protestant Tübingen School. The essay *Die Christuspartei in der korinthischen Gemeinde, der Gegensatz des paulinischen und petrinischen Christentums in der ältesten Kirche, der Apostel Petrus in Rom* (The Christ Party in the Corinthian Community, the Opposition of Pauline and Petrine Christianity in the earliest Church, the apostle Peter in Rome or abbreviated 'The Christ Party') was published in the *Tübinger Zeitschrift*. It is necessary to stress that the term 'Judeo-Christian' is attributed to Baur and that it most likely was used before (Jones 2012). There is also much to be said about how the German terms '*jüdisch-christliche*', '*judenchristen*' and '*judenchristlich*' are translated. Baur, like Nietzsche in the *Anti-Christ* (paragraph 24) and 'The Genealogy of Morals' uses the former terms, which can be translated as either Jewish Christian or Judeo-Christian. David Lincicum (Lincicum 2012), a Baur expert, translates the term as 'Jewish Christianity' rather than Judeo-Christian. However, in the 19th century, translations into English of works using these terms used the term 'Judeo-Christian' which is why Baur, and the Tübingen School he founded, are credited with its coinage.

> It was only in the late nineteenth century in Germany that the Judeo-Christian tradition, as such, was first defined. It was introduced by German Protestant scholarship to account for the findings developed by the Higher Criticism of the Old Testament and achieved considerable currency as a polemical term in that period. There, quite clearly, the negative significance of the expression became primary. The emphasis fell not on the communality of the word 'tradition' but to the accented stress of the hyphen. The Jewish was latinized and abbreviated into 'Judeo' to indicate a dimension, albeit a pivotal dimension, of the explicit Christian experience. ... It was no less for all its efforts to be scholarly, an exhibition of what Solomon Schechter called 'Higher Anti-Semitism,' for the Jewish in the Jewish experience was all but obliterated. (Cohen 1971, xviii)

The essays collected in this volume speak to the three claims made by Cohen in this paragraph. These three claims are:
1) The term 'Judeo-Christian' was coined in Germany in the 19th century by Protestant theological scholars – more specifically by F.C. Baur, founder of the Tübingen School.

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**5** For this reason, we begin this volume with a contribution that explicitly connects an important early 18th century thinker, John Toland, to F.C. Baur.

2)  The term, unlike its (re)appearance in the United States (concurrent with the rise of the Nazis), had a decidedly negative usage – popularised by Nietzsche by means of the notion of *ressentiment* or slave morality.

3)  This term is anti-Semitic. While Cohen uses the term to refer specifically to the exclusion of Jews, several of the essays in this volume consider its connection to another related form of exclusion in Europe today – Islamophobia. Given that the term 'Semite' was used in Germany in the 19th century by orientalists, theologians and philologists to include Arabs and Muslims, Cohen's claim rings as true today as sixty years ago.

Broadly speaking, these three claims can be categorised into (1) issues of historical context, (2) lines of theological and philosophical inquiry, or (3) political implications. For this reason, the contributions in this volume have been grouped under these three major headings. Understandably, while several of the articles in this book are able to dialogue with more than just one of these three considerations, what follows is a brief summary of each contribution that clarifies why we have chosen to order them in this way.

# 1  History

Four contributions make up this first part. **Stanley Jones** traces the term 'Jewish Christianity,' from its first use by John Toland to its use a century later by Ferdinand Christian Baur. By looking at the historical contexts of both their writings, Jones concludes that while both authors were interested in ancient Jewish Christianity, they were both not interested in the Judeo-Christian tradition as such. **Peter Hodgson**, in his turn, examines Baur's interpretation of Christianity's relationship to Judaism and argues that, taken on its own merits (without the subsequent reception of Baur by later scholars), Baur strived hard to strike an appropriate balance when describing Christianity's relationship to Judaism. **Ivan Kalmar** takes a closer look at 19th century Orientalism and, in so doing, shows that Jews of that 'long century' were associated in the Christian mind with Muslims, but such was the attraction to the Orient that 'self-orientalizing Jews' would themselves have seen greater affinity with a shared Judeo-Muslim tradition than the Judeo-Christian tradition of today's European discourse. **Noah Strote** then analyzes the logic of Judeo-Christianity as it developed in the latter half of the 20th century in post-war Germany and how that was shaped by a post-Shoah and Cold War context.

Taken as a whole, these four contributions offer a broad historical view of events from the turn of the 18th century, through the so-called 'long 19th century', to the latter half of the 20th century. They also help situate and contextualise the influence that Baur would have on later uses of the term 'Judeo-Christian'. Another observation is the distinctly European (even German) context to such discussions, well before the term 'Judeo-Christian' would become a 'floating signifier' and cross into other continents and contexts.

## 2 Theology and Philosophy

Another way of looking at the signifier 'Judeo-Christian' is to parse its significance in theological and philosophical terms. The second part of the volume comprises five contributions. **Emmanuel Nathan** examines the Apostle Paul, often seen as the first embodiment of the 'Judeo-Christian' before Judaism and Christianity formally parted ways. In particular, Nathan looks at the reclamation of the 'Jewish Paul' in biblical studies and argues that a Christian tendency persists in situating the Apostle between law and love. From another angle, **Gesine Palmer** analyses the new Paulinism – a philosophical interest in the Apostle Paul coming from such philosophers as Giorgio Agamben, Slavoj Žižek, and Alain Badiou. She warns, however, against a new kind of antinomianism to be found in their works, which these thinkers associate with Jewish law. **Marianne Moyaert** reflects on the theological significance of the 'Judeo-Christian' tradition as a Catholic theologian conscious of writing in the post-Shoah period and following the Second Vatican Council. She cautions, however, against an over-enthusiasm within some Catholic circles to celebrate Christian Seder Meals and uses this concrete instance to reflect more deeply on the challenges of stressing too much continuity between Judaism and Christianity. **Christoph Schmidt** takes as his starting point a debate between Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger on a post-secular relation between secular society and religion. In light of this he examines the demand for an alternative reconstruction of the classical enlightened canon of modernity created at the end of the 18th century by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, in which Judaism is succeeded by Christianity and the latter in turn by modern enlightened culture. **Michael Fagenblat** commences his contribution by outlining Emmanuel Levinas's 'research project' on Judeo-Christianity based on Levinas' notes during his time as a prisoner of war (between 1940 and 1945). From there, Fagenblat traces Levinas' phenomonology of Judeo-Christianity, particularly in light of Israel's 'Passion' in the Shoah, but concludes that discussion on this fraught 'fraternal existence' between Judaism and Christianity should also

nowadays include Islam, so that it may offer a corrective to the otherwise one-sided binary opposition of today's geo-political alliances. In this way, Fagenblat sets the stage to move on to the third political part of the volume.

Read together, these five contributions occupy a fitting 'middle section' to the volume, reflecting as they do on theological and philosophical currents in the latter half of the 20th century, but at the same time looking back to their 19th (sometimes even 18th) century antecedents, and then forward to realities and challenges in the 21st century. Starting the section with biblical studies also offered a linking function to the preceding chapters on the origins of the signifier 'Judeo-Christian' and their rootedness in philological and history-of-religions approaches. At the same time, kicking off the section with the apostle Paul also revealed how he embodies an apt intersection of historical, theological, and philosophical discourses (with even a faint nod to potential political implications), and these theological and philosophical discourses then continued to unwind and rewind through the remaining section. Taken together, the contributions in this section also reflect how discussions on the 'Judeo-Christian' signifier have changed in the aftermath of the Shoah. In addition, what equally becomes apparent are the subtle differences between Protestant and Catholic approaches on the 'Christian' side of this hyphen, inasmuch as the 'Jewish' side equally attests to a rich diversity of opinions and positions.

# 3  Contemporary Political Implications

The third and final part is comprised of four contributions. **Warren Zev Harvey** takes us through the understanding of the Judeo-Christian tradition in the USA since the 1940s and how its usage has been contrasted against five 'others': (1) the Christian tradition; (2) Hellenism; (3) modern secularism; (4) other religious traditions; and (5) the Judeo-Christo-Islamic tradition, i.e., the Abrahamic or monotheistic tradition. Not all of its uses are praiseworthy, just as some are not entirely blameworthy either. Other uses are simply indifferent. The context in which it is used is therefore of paramount importance. **Itzhak Benyamini** takes as his starting point Lyotard's notion of the hyphen in the signifier 'Judeo-Christian' and asks whether, in light of the long theological and historical encounters between the two religious traditions, the relations between them need to be reconsidered in a more complex way than simply their connection, or disconnection, through a hyphen. The political ramifications of Benyamini's reflections become immediately clear in the contribution by **Amanda Kluveld**. She analyzes the different uses of the signifier 'Judeo-Christian' in debates on European current affairs. She

also compares how the European usage of the term differs from its usage in the USA. In the United States the idea of a Judeo-Christian tradition is part of a civil religion. In Europe, however, the term is not connected to either the Christian or the Jewish tradition. It is an instrument in a toolbox of political rhetoric that appeals to a secular search for an identity or even Europe's soul. Finally, **Anya Topolski** traces the genealogy of the signifier Judeo-Christianity in order expose the problematic political stakes of European identity constructions. Topolski argues that the signifier creates only an illusory unity since it does so by exclusionary means. A signifier that was previously used to exclude Jews is now being used to exclude Muslims, another of Europe's historical others. Both Kluveld and Topolski's contributions close the circle begun by Warren Zev Harvey's contribution in this section, but also link back to earlier discussions on Baur, supersessionism, Orientalism, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia that have arisen in previous sections of this volume.

While the contributions in this section can certainly be read on their own terms, they cohere well together in reflecting on the broader societal and political implications of the signifier 'Judeo-Christian' once their historical origins, and theological-philosophical connotations have been adequately considered. This is also reflected in the chronology of this section. The political implications of the Judeo-Christian signifier have their roots and antecedents in the 19th and 20th centuries, but the contributions in this section are resolute in discussing its impact on current affairs in today's 21st century context. In addition, whereas due recognition is given to the usage of the signifier in the United States, the majority of the contributions return the discussion to its European origins and choose to reflect upon the impact it has on contemporary European political discourse. In doing so, the 'contemporary floating signifier' has come full circle, returning to its Europeans origins.

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In lieu of an epilogue or conclusion, which might imply that this inquiry into the European genealogy of the signifier 'Judeo-Christian' tradition is complete (or can be completed), we would like to reiterate a few insights gathered from this volume that we hope will contribute to a continuing conversation. As the third section in this volume makes clear, the signifier in Europe today has found itself confronted with new realities and challenges. What is often overlooked is how complex and significant its European story was and is, a story that weaves itself through centuries of theology, philosophy, philology, and politics. What is clear is that it has had and continues to have many different meanings and usages and, if there is one lesson we must carry forward, it is that if one should choose to use this term (in spite of all the reasons not to do so), then it is imperative that we

qualify what we mean when doing so. Moreover, when we hear others using this term, especially in academic circles, it would be good to ask for clarification for as, Condorcet wisely remarked in 1793, "the corruption of the meaning of words hints at the corruption of things in themselves" (71).

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